

12/13

Hi my name is Denise Soppas and this is the 8th principle minute.

Unitarian Universalist around the country have committed to dismantling racism beginning with their own practices, their identity and their own stories.

The UUA is hoping to vote on adopting the 8th principle at a future GA. Towards this end, there is an 8th Principle Learning Community that meets monthly. I represent our congregation at these meetings.

At the last meeting Ally Tharp from the UU Earth Ministries told a story of how it appeared that POC seemed to be losing interest in this ministry and also seemed to be leaving the faith. Through discussions she found that the perception that BIPOC were not interested in environmental issues was a fallacy. They were dropping from the UU environmental effort not because they were not interested in environmental justice, but because they felt their voices were not being heard. While “Save the Whale”, “Save the polar bear”, and recycling are valid environmental concerns they appeal to white suburban folks. BIPOC people face environmental hazards and risks in the forms of contaminated drinking water, schools near toxic plants and building nuclear waste dumps near communities of color. These issues are environmental justice issues tied up in racism and economic inequality and impede folks from living sustainable lives. These environmental issues, when voiced by BIPOC in the UU Earth Ministries were not being heard or given priority.

These discussions led to the UU Earth Ministries to adopt the 8th principle. Now, UU Earth ministries intentionally avoids white centering in their environmental justice discussions.

The work of the UU Earth Ministries had been dominated by white voices and viewed through a white lens. By incorporating the values of the 8th principle into their work, the UU Earth Ministries broadens their capacity to address complex environmental issues that are deeply intertwined with racial and economic inequality.

I tell you this story because it relates to the work ahead of us as a congregation. If we add the 8th principle to the 7, we need to look at our own practices, identity, and stories with a new lens to dismantle the racism in ourselves and our institutions. Together we will continue to educate ourselves and discuss what it means to develop a culture of being accountably anti-racist.

12/27/20

Hi my name is Sylvia Walker and this is the 8th principle minute.

Unitarian Universalist around the country have committed to dismantling racism beginning with their own practices, their identity and their own stories.

Institutional Racism can be seen most clearly by looking at the nomination of Deb Haaland for Secretary of the Interior. Ms Haaland will be the first Native American to hold a cabinet position and, as the head of the Department of the Interior, she will be the first Native American to control the Bureau of Indian affairs since it was founded in 1824. The inherent institutional racism that prevented Native American from leading the organization that controlled their destiny for so long should be obvious to all. The resistance that she will face in her Senate hearings will be based in stereotypes and thinly veiled dog-whistle terminology. However, it is the lack of news coverage about the impact of her nomination on Native Americans that we really need to pay attention to. We need to hear their voices and understand why, as the Washington Post said, “tears seemed to rain all over Indian Country after Haaland’s selection was announced last week.” We need to lift up those voices and support the dismantling of the institutional racism that controls and represses BIPOC in this country. We start by acknowledging that, by rights, the land on which we live, was taken from others who were here before us.

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1/3/21

Hi my name is Chris Baglieri and this is the 8th principle minute.

Unitarian Universalist around the country have committed to dismantling racism beginning with their own practices, their identity and their own stories.

You may remember that in March of 2017 there were several resignations in the UUA, including President Peter Morales, related to hiring practices and the “white supremacy culture” imbedded in the UUA. Since then, the UUA has been taking a broader look at UUA culture which was privileging white people as job candidates as part of the effort to dismantle the institutional racism at the UUA.

One thing they identified was that the UUA had a history of hiring credentialed UU ministers for many jobs. They realized the skillset they were looking for was management experience not necessarily someone with a ministerial academic credential. This change in hiring practice has resulted in the UUA hiring several religious educators who are also people of color for the Leadership Council.

This change in culture has also resulted in a change in leadership of the UUA regions. The percentage of people of color in these roles has risen to 40%.

Another change was to incorporate telecommuting in the headquarters staffing model. It is no longer a requirement for employees to live in Boston. Now most employees work at home at least one day a week which has also fostered more diversity.

Another major change to reduce biases was to intentionally create a diverse hiring team. This has meant that the hiring team might need to include non-UU's to achieve the necessary balance.

These changes to the UUA culture and hiring practices have diversified the staff of the Unitarian Universalist Association and deepened its commitment to antiracism, anti-oppression, and multiculturalism. This is an example of

what the UUA is doing to work towards dismantling racism. We at First U will also need to examine our own practices to dismantle racism in our own culture.

If we add the 8th principle to the 7, we need to look at our own practices, identity, and stories with a new lens to dismantle the racism in ourselves and our institutions. Together we will continue to educate ourselves and discuss what it means to develop a culture of being accountably anti-racist.

1/10/21

Hi my name is <name> and I've been asked to deliver the 8th principle minute today.

Denise was planning to talk about something completely different during the 8th principle minute today. But this changed after Wednesday.

Insurrection in this country in 2021. It is rooted in racism. It was initiated by racism. It was enabled by racism. It was facilitated by racism. It is being perpetuated by racism.

This week we saw insurrection in the nation's capital. It didn't start with a mob on Wednesday. It started when White Supremacists elected a fellow White Supremacist as president. His rhetoric provided fertile ground for the growth of what had been a fringe movement. Racism is such an integral part of our national fabric that many people who do not want to be racist remained unaware of it until this past year. The movement to overturn the election sees white supremacists co-opting disaffected people. This led to open discussion of revolt on Wednesday, culminating in speeches by the white supremacist leaders launching the mob at the Congress.

They were able to partially succeed in their goal because the Capitol Police is, in the end, a racist institution. They viewed the largely white crowd as a non-threat, despite the public calls to do just what they did; attempt to prevent Congress from certifying the election through violent means.

Once inside the capitol building they were already contained. They could all have been arrested. Instead they were allowed to leave, peacefully, at their own pace.

The immediate cause the crowd latched onto was the lie that the election was stolen. White supremacists in both chambers of congress perpetuated this lie even after they themselves were threatened as a result.

We can all see the racist disparity between how these seditious traitors were treated as compared to Black Lives Matter protesters. Last summer marches that were organized with the goal of a peaceful protest were met with a militarized response. This winter a mob that had been organized with the intent of insurrection was not treated as a serious threat because they were white.

It's not over. Many of our leaders either still refuse to see the threat ~~or side with the insurrectionists.~~ We have a lot of work to do. ~~Let's start with our house.~~ This is what the 8th principle calls us to work on. Lets start with ourselves and our own congregation.

1/16/21

Hi my name is <> and I am a member of the 8th principle committee. Unitarian Universalist around the country have committed to dismantling racism beginning with their own practices, their identity and their own stories.

The 8th Principle states that we “ **covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.**”

What does “Beloved Community” mean? Where did that term come from?

The term “The Beloved Community” was first coined in the early days of the 20th Century by the philosopher-theologian Josiah Royce. Dr. Martin Luther King popularized the notion of the “Beloved Community” in his speeches.

I want to read a quote from the King Center which explains Martin Luther King's vision of "Beloved Community".

"For Dr. King, The Beloved Community was not a lofty utopian goal to be confused with the rapturous image of the Peaceable Kingdom, in which lions and lambs coexist in idyllic harmony. Rather, The Beloved Community was for him a realistic, achievable goal that could be attained by a critical mass of people committed to and trained in the philosophy and methods of nonviolence.

Dr. King's Beloved Community is a global vision, in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood. In the Beloved Community, international disputes will be resolved by peaceful conflict-resolution and reconciliation of adversaries, instead of military power. Love and trust will triumph over fear and hatred. Peace with justice will prevail over war and military conflict."

If we add the 8th principle to the 7, we need to look at our own practices, identity, and stories with a new lens to dismantle the racism in ourselves and our institutions. Together we will continue to educate ourselves about what is means to build a "Beloved Community" and develop a culture of being accountably anti-racist.

1/24/21

Hi my name is Maureen Erwin and this is the 8th principle minute.

Unitarian Universalist around the country have committed to dismantling racism beginning with their own practices, their identity, and their own stories.

The idea of the need for an 8th Principle originated with Paula Cole Jones and Bruce Pollack-Johnson. They realized that there were two different paradigms in Unitarian Universalist circles 1) the 7 Principles and 2) Beloved Community. After working with congregations on these issues for over 15 years, Paula realized that a person can believe they are being a “good UU” and following the 7 Principles without thinking about or dealing with racism and other oppressions at the systemic level.

After all, most UU congregations are primarily European-American in membership, culture, music, and leadership, even when located near diverse communities. She came to believe that an 8th Principle was needed to correct this. She partnered with Bruce Pollack-Johnson and other anti-racists activists to write the 8th principle in 2013. Bruce’s congregation, UU Church of the Restoration in Philadelphia, incorporated the 8th principle into their Covenant in 2017. That same year during General Assembly, Paula and Bruce recommended that the UUA itself adopt the 8th principle.

Unitarian Universalists and the UUA have done good work in fighting racism in society at large, especially during the Civil Rights Movement and during unrest in recent years. And in 1997 the UUA passed a resolution at General Assembly to become an Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppression Multi-Cultural Organization. But over the years our accountability mechanism has failed us, and insufficient introspection has resulted in a failure to adequately address racism in our own institutions

Our existing 7 principles *imply* this 8th principle, but do not *explicitly* hold us accountable for addressing these oppressions directly, especially at the *systemic* level.

The 8th Principle came from an understanding that we need something to renew our commitment to this work, to hold ourselves accountable, and to fulfill the potential of our existing principles.

Soon you will be asked to review the First U 8th principle resolution that our congregation will vote on in a few months.

Together we will continue to educate ourselves and discuss what it means to develop a culture of being accountably anti-racist.

1/31/21

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The UUA is hoping to vote on adopting the 8th principle at a future GA. Towards this end, there is a UUA 8th Principle Learning Community that meets monthly.

I represent our congregation at these meetings.

At the December meeting several ministers shared stories from their congregation regarding steps they took to adopt the 8th principle and how they began to examine their congregation.

One congregation shared how after they adopted the 8th principle, they examined the components of their worship services with an 8th principle lens - who composed the hymns they sung, the musical performances, videos, readings and stories included in their services.

They decided they needed to take an intentional approach to designing the service to transform the institutional constructs of their worship to include representation of diversity of people or voices in their services. They began to include at least one component of the worship service from a person of color (readings, music, videos, story, etc.). Sometimes this meant having videos or speakers from outside of the congregation present a reading or perform the music or sing the hymn.

For congregations taking this approach, this must be intentional in the beginning. It will eventually become embedded in their culture.

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2/7/21

Hi my name is Sylvia Walker and this is the 8th principle minute.

We live in a time where it is increasingly clear that Black lives are deeply undervalued and violently treated. The word “*anti-racist*” has become trendy. It is important that we have a shared understanding of what anti-racism looks like.

Becoming “antiracist” is a **lifelong commitment to self-education**.

Anti-racist work is never completely finished.

What are we committing to when we adopt the 8th principle and commit to dismantling racism?

One thing is a shared commitment to continued education.

In this week’s email blast there is information about the spring session for “Dialogues on Race” sponsored by the Summit Anti-Racism Community Collaborative.

A Dialogue Circle meets for five weeks, for two hours at a time. The group members discuss challenging readings, learn to listen deeply to one another’s experiences and move forward in their individual journeys toward understanding and dismantling structural racism.

I encourage you to sign -up! Together we will continue to educate ourselves and discuss what it means to develop a culture of being accountably anti-racist.

Future idea

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(UU's historically have had a mixed record of racial justice: e.g., we had people on both sides of Abolitionism (including people like Jefferson who was a slaveholder), and Unitarians were proponents of Eugenics (leading to some of the racial extremes of Nazism and Apartheid in South Africa).

It is too easy to ignore these issues, which is exactly what keeps the system of racism in our society alive. We need to de-center whiteness and other dominant cultures in UUism.)

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